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From Shakspeare to Pope. An Inquiry into the causes and phenomena of the rise of classical poetry in England, by Edmund Gosse, Clark Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Cambridge. New York. Dodd, Mead & Company. 1885.

This volume is the result of a series of lectures delivered before the Lowell Institute in December, 1884, and also at Johns Hopkins University, Yale College and other places. The aim of the distinguished lecturer is to explain the rise of classical poetry in England without resorting to French influence. In order to accomplish his purpose he seeks for the sources of the classical influence not only in England, but within the limits of the seventeenth century. In the lecture on Davenant and Cowley, Mr. Gosse says: "At the present day it is a great temptation to those who have made special periods and segments of the poetic produce of a nation their peculiar care, to exaggerate the value of what they have unearthed. \* \* \* From this narrowness, from this provincial attitude, which may easily become a snare for those who pursue literature alone, the study of the history of literature may be recommended as an escape." With this general principle so clearly and concisely stated we are in full accord. Then comes his application of the principle. "A writer too crabbed or too insignificant to claim our praise on the score of his verses alone, becomes interesting at once, and important, when we see that he possessed an influence over a younger writer than himself, who attained genuine success or when he marks a step in the range which culminated at last in a poet." It is our present purpose to attempt to show that the application, which the critic makes of his principle misleads him to give undue prominence to poets, of whom the general reader of literature has little if any knowledge.

The problem which Mr. Gosse seeks to solve is simply this: How did romantic *overflow* (a new term for *enjambé* lines) become classical *distich*? His argument is in brief, that, because Edmund Waller, a poet overpraised by his own generation, and neglected ever since, wrote *distich*, which appears to be classical, as early as 1623, therefore to him and other minor contemporaries, who felt and acknowledged his influence,

the rise of classical poetry is due.

If we follow the general principle so admirably laid down by the lecturer, and take the history of literature instead of the literature of the seventeenth century, we should begin not with English poetry at the death of Shakspeare, but with Shakspeare himself, and end not with the Restoration, but with Pope. From this wider outlook the problem becomes: How did the romantic *distich* of Shakspeare become the classical *distich* of Pope?

Let us begin with one of the early comedies, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1592-3) Act I, Scene II, Julia and Lucetta.

*Jul.*—What thinkst thou of the fair Sir Eg-lamour?

*Luc.*—As of a knight, well-spoken, neat and [fine;

But were I you, he never should be [mine.

*Jul.*—What thinkst thou of the gentle Pro-teus?

*Luc.*—Lord! Lord! to see what folly reigns [in us!

In this example the expression is evidently more studied than the thought. Passing to romantic *overflow*, as represented in the *Tempest* (1610) let us take the speech of Miranda, Act I, Scene II.

"O, I have suffered  
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,  
Who had no doubt some noble creatures in her,  
Dashed all to pieces."

Here the thought is evidently more studied than the expression. If we pass from this example to Lycidas (1637) selecting the well-known lines:

"Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know  
[how to hold  
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the  
[least  
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs."

we comprehend at a glance that, while in the romantic overflow of Shakspeare, thought is more studied than expression, in the scholastic overflow of Milton expression is neglected to that degree, that a reaction is inevitable.

The earliest lines of Dryden, those on the death of Lord Hastings, indicate that he felt

the influence of reaction. Though the metaphysical conceits in these lines are frequently pointed out, it is of prime importance to notice his use of distich. Now we claim that it is more philosophical to ascribe his employment of the couplet to the necessary reaction, which followed the extreme practice of the scholastic overflow, than to attribute it wholly to Waller and his contemporaries. The history of literature is concerned not so much with Dryden's failure to introduce distich into a sphere of poetry whose form had been determined by the great dramatic geniuses of the Elizabethan age, as with the more important fact, that his apprenticeship in the hack writing of rhymed comedies enabled him to become the satirist, whose distich, reacting from scholastic extremes, prepared the way for the classic distich of Pope. The request which Dryden is said to have made of Milton, that he might dramatize *Paradise Lost*, and the reply of the aged poet that the dramatist might *tag the verses*, if he wished, throw more light upon scholastic overflow, and the natural reaction against it, than all the poetry Waller ever wrote.

While Dryden succeeded in bringing English poetry back under the trammels of distich, he did not always confine himself to the couplet. Perhaps the best characterization in *Absalom and Achitophel* is that of Shaftesbury, of which the most effective part is the familiar triplet:

"A fiery soul, which working out its way,  
Fretted the pigmy body to decay  
And o'er informed the tenement of clay."

As in the middle comedies of Shakspeare there is a nice balance by means of which thought and expression are held as it were *in equilibrio*: so in the satires of Dryden there is a similar adjustment. The first equipoise suggests that a preponderance in favor of expression is at hand; the second that a turn in favor of expression is immanent.

Pope begins by studying expression for the sake of the thought, and at some stages of his work, as in parts of the *Essay on Man*, he evidently studies expression for the sake of expression alone. We will take as a fair example of classical distich the familiar verses:

Soft is the strain where Zephyr gentle blows,  
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers  
[flows;

But, when loud surges lash the sounding shore,  
The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent  
[roar.

We have thus hastily passed from Shakspeare to Pope, taking familiar passages from leading poets to illustrate the natural transition from romantic to classical distich. It seems that this course has the positive advantage that it gives us a few links in the great chain of the historic continuity of English Literature from *Beowulf* to the *Idylls of the King*, and also the negative advantage that it does not bring to our notice authors who were long ago consigned to merited oblivion.

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Das Pronomen bei Molière im Vergleich zu dem heutigen und dem altfranzösischen Sprachgebrauch von Hermann Schmidt. Kiel; Lipsius & Tischer, 1885. 8. 58 S. M. 1.60.

The present treatise is one division of a work for which, under the title of "*Die syntaktischen Eigenthümlichkeiten der Sprache Molière's im Vergleich zu dem heutigen und dem altfranzösischen Sprachgebrauch*," a prize was awarded by the philosophical faculty of the University of Kiel. The aim of the portion of the work here separately published, is to show that in the syntax of the pronoun in Molière there are uses which deviate from those at present prevailing, to study such deviations both from the point of view of the thirteenth century and of to-day, and to show that they are remnants of the older language. The work, then, is of special interest to the student of historical French syntax.

One of the most prominent features which distinguish the syntax of the Old French from that of the present day, is the freedom of the former in the use of its pronouns. The atonic personal pronouns, for example, could occupy positions in relation to the verb which the accepted usage of to-day does not allow, and the tonic was often found in cases where it is now agreed to use the atonic only. The language of the seventeenth century had still retained many traces or remnants of this freedom of the Old French, and a study of these peculiarities